

Media release

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Big Cig to marry pokie machine at SkyCity on Gamblefree Day

Auckland's SkyCity Casino will be the venue for a different sort of wedding on Gamblefree Day, Thursday 1 September at 12 noon.

Big Cigarette will marry a pokie machine in a street theatre event outside the Casino to protest against SkyCity's planned 'outdoor' balcony that will allow gamblers to simultaneously smoke and play pokies.

Student ASH, a group comprised of medical students, and other supporters will be taking part in the protest.

ASH Director, Ben Youdan, says SkyCity is taking a backward step in combining smoking and pokie machines.

"We are working towards a Smokefree New Zealand. This move takes us back to the days before workplaces became smokefree," he says.

"There also needs to be clear separation of gambling from smoking as it has been an important mechanism to reduce gambling harm".

Andrée Froude, Problem Gambling Foundation spokesperson, says this is a clear attempt to simply keep people at pokie machines feeding their money in.

"We know that 40 percent of the money lost on pokie machines comes from people with a gambling problem. SkyCity putting in a smoking balcony is a way to get more money from the same group of people," she says.

Auckland's SkyCity Casino has permission from the Gambling Commission to build a structure that will have louvers to let in the fresh air, allowing pokie players to smoke.

ASH and the Problem Gambling Foundation believe this really stretches the whole concept of smoking in an outside area.

Both organisations are appalled that this decision will set a precedent and will work together to try to ensure that this is one fire that is put out before it spreads.

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